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ABSTRACT

A career/vocational education training module was developed based on a needs assessment of 2,000 secondary teachers of emotionally disturbed, learning disabled, and educable mentally retarded in Wisconsin. Concepts included in the module were historical factors, definitions, implications for the handicapped, models for implementation, assessment, materials and resources, and the development of the individualized education program (IEP). Among activities were performing a needs assessment of each participant's current school situation and program, incorporating career/vocational concepts into IEPs by adapting goals and objectives from existing curriculum guides. Application of the model in three sites (Milwaukee secondary, Chicago secondary, and Chicago postsecondary) is reviewed. (CL)

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CAREER/VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN THE INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLAN:

TEACHER PREPARATION AND APPLICATION STRATEGIES

by

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OVERVIEW

Statistics from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (1978) and the Bureau for the Handicapped (1973) both depict minority youth as unemployed and underemployed more often than other groups in our society. The Office of Civil Rights' survey (1980) found handicapped students are disproportionately high in low skill occupations and underrepresented in skilled occupational training. In spite of the requirement that 10% of vocational education funding be allocated for handicapped youth, only 2.5% of vocational education students were handicapped. One third of the handicapped students in vocational education were in separate programs and not mainstreamed.

This has particular implication for teacher training. Specifically, special education teachers need exposure to and knowledge of the job market and need to raise their expectations for special education students. Teachers surveyed in the Chicago area listed general labor and other unskilled jobs as expectations for their students (Meyers, 1980). Special education teachers must be familiar with job possibilities and options that can be open to handicapped individuals. When special education teachers interviewed employers, they found an overall willingness to hire handicapped youths as long as modifications did not interfere with productivity. A problem identified by employers and teachers alike was that handicapped youths do not go to the employer's door to find out for themselves what they need to know and do to get and keep a job. Overall, this interview process provided an encouraging exposure for the teachers about the possibilities for their students (Meyers, 1980). Teachers and researchers need to gather more information about job possibilities.

The teacher of minority handicapped students needs additional skills. The statistics are intensified when students represent both minority and handicapped; more unemployment, poorer basic skills and less opportunity for skilled job training. The dropout rate for Hispanic students is 70% nationwide and 85% in urban communities (Pifer, 1979). Special education teachers at the secondary level need training to be aware of students' skills despite a language barrier. Language must cease to be the factor that lowers expectations.

Society does discriminate against handicapped persons and against minority persons. This makes it difficult for these people to function productively. With training and conviction special education teachers can offer students models, pride, encouragement and acceptance. Students can then achieve, in spite of our negative environment.

This paper will discuss a teacher training module and give directions for including career/vocational education in Individualized Education Plans (I.E.P.). Included in this paper will be examples of these principles as applied in three actual school situations.

TEACHER TRAINING

Knowledge of career/vocational options for handicapped students must be incorporated into their educational programs if these students are to be successful adults. They also need entry level skills and job keeping skills. Teacher training programs have traditionally not included these competencies.

Three years ago, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee received a teacher training grant to develop training in critical in-service areas for secondary teachers. A survey was done to assess the needs of 2,000 teachers of emotionally disturbed, learning disabled and educable mentally retarded students around the state of Wisconsin. Of the four major areas identified as training priorities, career/vocational skills was listed as the top priority (Gruber, 1980). A training module in career/vocational education was developed to give participating teachers a knowledge base and allow them to assess their own teaching situations and to explore and practice various aspects of career/vocational education before implementing them into their own programs.

The goals for the module are:

1. To examine concepts of vocational and career education for secondary exceptional education students.

2. To explore potential assessment tools and resources appropriate for determining students' interests, aptitudes, strengths and weaknesses in the area of vocational and career options.

3. To identify entry level skills in vocational and technical classes appropriate for exceptional education teachers to incorporate into their programs.

4. To explore strategies for developing prevocational programs utilizing school and community resources.

Concepts included in the module are historical factors, definitions, implications for the handicapped, models for implementation, assessment,

materials and resources available, the development of the I.E.P., and an extensive bibliography. Activities include:

1. Doing a needs assessment of each participant's current school situation and program.

2. Examining methods of incorporating career/vocational concepts into students' programs. Choices for these include the Adult Performance Level Curriculum, Life Centered Career Education Model or the Instructional Based Appraisal System. Specific objectives can be used from these models for the students' I.E.P.'s and can be taught via infusion or unit instruction.

3. Developing assessment plans, including student skills, competencies and knowledge levels. Also included in the planning are methods of assessment, determining who does the assessment, defining entry level skills, determining course competencies and identifying school and community resources.

4. Incorporating career/vocational concepts into students' I.E.P.'s by adapting goals and objectives from existing curriculum guides. Choosing appropriate areas for each student is based on the individual needs of the students.

5. Making a teacher commitment and action plan in the form of a contract.

6. Designing a career/vocational development plan for participant's school setting through involving appropriate staff and obtaining a commitment to the plan from the administration.

Career vocational programs must be individualized for each student. Culturally diverse handicapped students may need expansion of their experiential and language backgrounds prior to tackling a career/vocational program. Because of this additional time may be needed to go through the educational system or curriculum requirements may change.

APPLICATION IN THE SCHOOLS

A. Milwaukee Secondary

The city of Milwaukee and the neighborhood around South Division High School is culturally diverse and has a predominantly immigrant population. Milwaukee industries attract these groups to high-paying jobs. The Asians and Hispanics are the latest to settle here.

South Division is a public high school with 2,500 students. Fifty-four percent of the students represent various minority backgrounds. Teachers and counselors number 140. Eight teachers serve 160 students in the Exceptional Education program.

In addition to the general curriculum, South offers career specialty programs. These include Food Service, Lodging and Tourism and Recreation. All freshmen exceptional education students enroll in either Introductory Industrial Arts or Home Economics courses.

Special education teachers at South need to be aware of vocational education options available to students. These include work-study, on-the-job training, a half-day program with the Milwaukee Area Technical College, career specialty programs at several public high schools, and the Lincoln Vocational Lab. The lab simulates six areas of job training for exceptional education students only.

The Learning Disabilities Program at South is resource based. Students take English and math in the Learning Disabilities Resource Room and are mainstreamed for other classes. Extra help is provided by the exceptional education teachers for all subjects to improve students' chances of success.

In the ninth grade L.D. math class, vocational/career concepts are related to real life situations. Student interest surveys are used to develop mini-units about various jobs. The ninth grade math includes consumer math, personal finances, taxes and measurements used in home economics or industrial arts. Career/vocational concepts are taught in the L.D. English class with job seeking skills, applications and interviews.

Vocational awareness must be ongoing; starting in the I.E.P. in a general format and carried over into the daily lesson plan. Teachers must plan with career/vocational concepts in mind. In this way career/vocational knowledge and skills are infused into a student's total curriculum.

B. Chicago Secondary

Gordon Technical High School, a Roman Catholic school, enrolls 2,600 culturally diverse students from the Chicago area. It offers many courses

of study including Honors, General College Prep, Business, and Technical. While there is not a special education program, the Individualized Instruction and Resource Program (I.I.R.P.) is designed for slow learners, students who have difficulty with school achievement and some identified from other schools as learning disabled.

Career education was taught as a unit of Social Studies in the I.I.R.P. during the sophomore year. Students involved in the course included 22% who were bilingual and do not use English as their primary language at home. The objectives of the course were for students to increase their awareness of the world of work, become familiar with applications and job-related forms, think about personal career choices and gain knowledge about getting and holding a job.

A variety of materials were used to expose students to job possibilities, preparation required and conditions the job involves on a daily basis. These included Working by Studs Terkel, actual job applications, and career cards from the Girl Scouts of America. In addition, a field trip was taken to the Chicago Tribune, students interviewed working people and union members, and panels of employees shared information about their jobs with the class members. Teacher made tests were used to determine students pre and post levels of occupational knowledge and job finding/keeping skills.

A survey of students at the end of the semester indicated that of all the units taught during the year in the Social Studies class, the career unit was most interesting and valuable.

C. Chicago Post Secondary

Taylor Business Institute is a private post-secondary vocational school that services a culturally diverse population in downtown Chicago. The school is a totally owned subsidiary of ITT. It is one of twenty ITT schools, the only one in a large urban setting.

Students must be high school graduates or have a G.E.D. and must be at a fifth grade level in reading and math to be enrolled. Nine hundred students are currently enrolled in the one year programs which include Medical Secretary, Secretary, Accounting Clerk, Bookkeeping Clerk, Clerk Typist, and Word Processing.

Student problems encountered which are not unique to Taylor students are oral and written language skills, basic math skills, motivation, attendance, study habits and professionalism.

All entering students are tested to determine skill levels. The Center for Intensified Learning does the assessment and then has developed a program which focuses on remediating and reinforcing English skills, especially as related to the student's chosen vocational area. In the Center individual, group and programmed learning are all utilized. Students are able to advance at their own speed. Audio-visual equipment and language labs are available. Emphasis is on written rather than oral skills because of the one year time limitation. Language skills are also emphasized and reinforced in all other subjects within the institute such as typing and shorthand.

Math testing and remediation are treated much like language; i.e., criterion reference testing is done and programmed learning materials are utilized based on the entry level of the student. Motivation, attendance

and study habits have decreased being problems since students and faculty each have an advocate who is a staff person to go to when problems arise. Competition between "pods" of students and incentives such as televisions, bus tickets, etc., are used for both students and instructors. These have proved very effective. In-services for instructors are mandatory. Through an agreement between Taylor Business Institute and Northeastern Illinois University to provide staff upgrading, teachers receive college credit. This is believed to be the only arrangement between a private vocational school and a major public university in the country.

Motivation is addressed in separate courses during the first and the fourth quarters. First quarter students are helped with personal development and attendance requirements. Fourth quarter students are expected to act, dress and present themselves as if on a job. At this time they also put together a portfolio and, with assistance, start job hunting activity.

The results of this T.B.I. approach to training are that placement of graduates has been between 97% and 99% for each of the past three years. A five year follow up shows that 85% of the graduates are in the same job or have been promoted five years after graduation.

CONCLUSION

Career/vocational education curriculum for culturally diverse special education students is essential. Different methods of implementing career/vocational programs can be used to meet the needs of special education students. Teachers need training if they are to be effective teaching career/vocational

concepts to students; therefore, universities must change how they train teachers.

Teaching career/vocational concepts is an ongoing process. Meeting the needs of special education students -- whether bilingual or not -- is individual; therefore, the I.E.P. is all important. There is no difference between bilingual, black or Caucasian special education students. The problems are the same. A process must be developed of incorporating the necessary concepts into each individual student's learning experience. Schools with culturally diverse student populations must consider infusing career education into all courses as well as having extensive courses and units for job seeking and job training skills.

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